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ABSTRACT

This book is designed to help Peace Corps volunteers continue to learn a language in the absence of a trained teacher. It consists of techniques intended to help volunteers build upon their daily contact with native informants. Seventeen techniques are presented, each consisting of a subject, objectives, technique, and procedures. The material draws upon several resource documents, three of which are included in appendices: (1) "A Guide for Language Study in the Field," by Arthur Levy; (2) "Monolingual Informant Techniques for Peace Corps Volunteers," by Judith Beinstein; and (3) Language Learning in the Field - A Policy Statement for Senegal PCVS," by Gary Engelberg. (AM)

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OF

LANGUAGE INFORMANT TECHNIQUES

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PROGRAM & TRAINING JOURNAL
REPRINT SERIES NUMBER 12

AN EXPANDED COLLECTION

OF

LANGUAGE INFORMANT TECHNIQUES

BY

GARY ENGELBERG

REGIONAL TRAINING RESOURCE OFFICE

DAKAR, SENEGAL (1975)

REPRINTED BY PEACE CORPS

PROGRAM & TRAINING JOURNAL REPRINT SERIES

JUNE 1976

PEACE CORPS REPRINT SERIES

This volume, part of the Program and Training Journal Reprint Series, is integral to Peace Corps efforts to provide technical support to its Volunteers and to share its material on "intermediate technology" with other participants in the international development community. Successful intermediate technologies designed for use in developing countries utilize low cost, locally available resources and provide new methods and approaches that are relevant to the needs of the users. Each Reprint, concentrating on a specific topic, is intended to contribute to PCVs' ability to respond creatively to challenges in the field. By design, many of the volumes chosen for reprinting raise questions. The purpose of this approach is two-fold: first, working with these materials, PCVs will raise additional questions that are crucial to understanding appropriate approaches to larger problems of "intermediate technology". Second, while supplementing, testing, and modifying these materials, Volunteers will continue to develop new techniques and strategies. These questions, developments and adaptations will provide a framework for future manuals addressing larger problems of change.

Questioning, developing and adapting techniques and strategies are as crucial to the Peace Corps as are cultural sensitivity and the transfer of skills. Recognizing this, Peace Corps has established an Information Collection and Exchange System that in various ways, including the Reprint Series and Manual Series, shares such contributions as broadly as possible. Materials that you prepare and submit to the Information Collection and Exchange will become a part of this System, a permanent contribution to the Peace Corps world -- the Volunteers, staff, local development workers and community residents who strive daily to consider alternatives, articulate goals, and fulfill the promise of the future.

The Reprints and Manuals are available upon request. Contributions to the Information Collection and Exchange may be submitted to the Peace Corps country office or directly to ICE, Office of Multilateral and Special Programs, ACTION, 806 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20525. Those who benefit from your contributions will thank you, just as we thank those whose work made the initial reprints, manuals and other aspects of the information exchange possible.

Information Collection and Exchange
Office of Multilateral and Special Programs

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AN EXPANDED COLLECTION

OF

LANGUAGE INFORMANT TECHNIQUES

By Gary ENGELBERG
P.T.R.O.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The following is an attempt to move one step closer to helping Peace Corps Volunteers continue their language learning in the field without trained teachers. This collection builds upon several excellent documents produced in the past on the same subject:

1. Where Do I Go From Here
   A Handbook for Continuing Language Study in the Field
   by Marguerite and Charles Kraft
   Michigan State University
   United States Peace Corps (1966)

This extremely encouraging and helpful handbook should be supplied to any Volunteer who is attempting to continue his language work in the field. During training, excerpts from the book should be presented periodically to kindle interest and prepare trainees for the task ahead of them.

2. A Guide for Language Study in the Field
   by Arthur Levy

In this guide, included in the appendix, Mr. Levy presents a useful outline to help Volunteers through the difficult initial problem of sequencing lessons and laying out an overall plan or progression. Without such a plan, many Volunteers begin to feel confused and frustrated, and fall easy prey to the common but discouraging feelings of "no progress" which so often prove fatal to individual study programs.

3. Monolingual Informant Techniques for Peace Corps Volunteers
   An Aspect of Continued Language Learning In-Country
   by Judith Feinstein (July 1968)

This excellent series of practical techniques on how to continue language learning in the field without trained teachers is included in the appendix.

4. Language Learning in the Field
   A Policy Statement for Senegal PCVs
   by Gary Engelberg

This document is included in the appendix as an example of one type of support that can and should be provided by Peace Corps staffs to encourage continued language learning in the field.

5. Dr. John Bassias

It is essential that we add a word of acknowledgement to Dr. John Bassias of Dartmouth College whose ideas and spirit not only permeate this booklet

but have permeated Peace Corps/Africa language training for years. Today's trainers and trainees, many of whom do not even know his name, continue to benefit unknowingly from his energy and imagination which started the ball rolling back in 1964.

In this Expanded Collection of Language Informant Techniques we attempt to provide the Volunteer with a simple, practical and hopefully interesting series of techniques to facilitate his language learning in the field.

We deliberately avoid an attempt to teach phonetic or basic linguistic terms and divisions, not because such tools are not useful, but simply to render the language learning process simple and unthreatening to the majority of Volunteers.

For those interested in a short but effective introduction to the I.P.A., we recommend:

Mastering the International Phonetic Alphabet
Guide and workbook
by Donald M. Decker
Elbert Covell College
University of the Pacific

A Regents Publication
Simon and Schuster
New York - 1970

We would also like to quote here from the introduction to Judith Beinstein's paper which can be found in the appendix. The introduction written by Joan Markessinis states (and we agree):

"Ideally, Volunteers should be taught these techniques during training so that they may eventually take over several classes a week. Bestowing such increasing responsibility on trainees as the program concludes facilitates transition from training to field. In the field, the Volunteers' success with informants depends on complete control of the learning situation..."

The techniques in this collection are designed to place "control of the learning situation" in the hands of the Volunteer. They attempt to place the burden of lesson planning and classroom procedure on the learner rather than on the untrained informant.

We had hoped to do more research and experimentation on the contents of this collection, but the unexpected closing of the R.T.P.O. has made it imperative that we publish this document now, rather than risking the possibility of its being lost in the files.

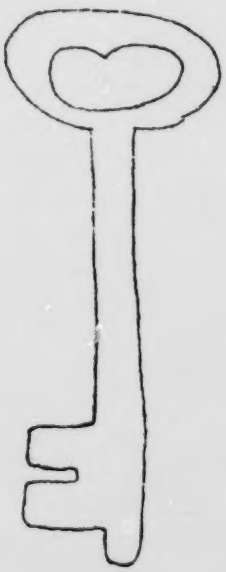
So, the sauce is on the fire, but the contents need tasting, stirring, spicing and simmering. We leave you the pleasant and exciting task of finishing up the "cooking".

Gary Engelberg
R.T.P.O.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE

(Excerpts from "Where Do I Go From Here?" by Marguerite and Charles Kraft)

Learning to know the language means learning to know the people. As you learn to talk about things as they talk about them, you will learn a lot about how they view life. You will develop a deeper understanding of their world. Don't force your way into it. If your attitude is such that you are prepared to learn from them, you will find yourself slowly entering and learning to better appreciate their world and their views toward life. Language learning is for us (as for their children) the best means of entrance into their cultural world.



Your emotions and attitudes play a very important part in your language learning. Much of your ability to get along with people and to adjust to your environment has come through your developing your own language as an effective tool. As you have grown, you have been taught to leave behind immature ways and to be independent. Now, you are back to complete helplessness -- practicing new sounds, fumbling about with strange words, grasping for modes and expression, and laying aside your ability to think for yourself.

You are sure to make mistakes, so prepare yourself for it. Be willing to make a fool of yourself, to lose prestige, to suffer embarrassment, in order to learn the new language. Learning it well will more than replace any prestige lost in those early stages of your language learning. Your persistence and sincerity to learn from the native speakers will win for you the respect of those who might have laughed at you.

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OF

LANGUAGE INFORMANT TECHNIQUES

The following techniques are designed to help you continue to learn a language on your own working with an untrained language informant.

Each sheet contains:

SUBJECT -- which is either explicit with notes or left to you to choose

OBJECTIVES -- which describe what you might hope to get out of the session both linguistically and culturally

TECHNIQUE -- which identifies the language informant technique being used in the lesson, which you may later apply to other subjects of your choice

PROCEDURES -- A step by step list of suggestions on how to proceed

(Most of the techniques in this collection, although designed for informants who speak some French or English, can be adapted for monolingual informants.)

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 1

SUBJECT: Greetings

A casual "hi" is rarely sufficient in Africa. Greetings are usually accorded more importance here than in the States and receive more time and attention. They are the door openers to any contact you may have and set the tone for all that follows. Neglecting greetings is a serious breach in etiquette. Watch people to see how it's done.

OBJECTIVES:

To learn the appropriate greetings for:
- periods of the day and night
- people of different age groups and sex (older man/woman, peer man/woman, child-boy/girl)

TECHNIQUE: Using Simple Drawings as Visual Aids

PROCEDURES:

1. Draw the following visual aids, each on a separate piece of paper

2. Using the visual aid, communicate the meaning of a period of the day - and a person - for example: morning - and young man (peer). Verify the informant's comprehension of the drawing.

3. Indicate to your informant that you want to learn greetings for the period of the day indicated, with that type of person indicated.

4. Listen carefully -- ask the informant to repeat.

5. Repeat several times after the informant, indicating that you want him to correct your pronunciation.

6. Play a short scene using the new structures, being sure to observe the informant and imitate appropriate gestures.

7. Ask the informant to repeat again, this time copying down what he is saying, using your own phonetic script.

8. Read back what you have written and have the informant correct you.

9. Repeat once again after the informant without looking at your notes.

10. Proceed in the same way for other periods of the day -- and other types of people using visual aids as cues. Follow the same procedures for each set of aids (in some cases, greetings may be the same).

11. Observe greetings out of class.

12. Use the new vocabulary out of class. Look for situations where you can use the vocabulary (don't be discouraged if the greetings are followed by a flood of language you don't understand. A journey of 10,000 miles begins with one step).

13. Study your notes that same day. Learn the greetings by heart.

14. Review the structures during the next class with your informant, using real greetings when you first meet and visual aid situations to cover other greetings.

Excerpts from "Where Do I Go From Here?" by Marguerite and Charles Kraft

INFORMANT TECHNIQUES

WHAT IF HE TALKS TOO FAST?

You may at times want to slow your language assistant down a bit when he speaks. For your own benefit it is better to keep a natural conversational speed most of the time. Remember, the problem is not that he speaks too fast but that you hear too slow -- and you need to learn to hear up to speed, not to slow him down to an unnatural speed. Slowing down a speaker tends to change the sounds, rhythm and intonation. Notice that in English we normally say, "Where'd ja go?" though if slowed down we would say "Where did you go?" which is much less natural.

When you are out among the people, they will speak too fast. Listen carefully and learn what you can but don't allow yourself to get discouraged. At first you may hear almost nothing. Keep listening and slowly the break through will come. Again, always allow yourself to be the one who is on the spot rather than your assistant or his countrymen. You will ruin their conversation if you demand that everything be slowed down to your speed of understanding. When you are a part of the conversation, however, you may have to occasionally ask politely to have something repeated, and even repeated slowly in order to keep up. Don't expect them to slow down much for you. Remember, to the native speaker his own language is the easiest in the world. You will find that if you are continually exposed to a faster flow of speech, you will begin hearing and understanding the faster speech.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 2

SUBJECT: Initial contacts

On first meetings people of different cultures act differently. Certain kinds of questions are appropriate -- others aren't. In certain countries, questions like "Where do you work?" are considered too familiar on first contact, and questions like "How many children do you have?" or "How old are you?" are rarely, if ever, asked.

OBJECTIVES:

-- To make a list of questions which are appropriate on first meeting situations in your country
-- To learn to manipulate several questions and answers to allow you to talk about yourself and find out about others in a culturally acceptable manner.

TECHNIQUE: Using cycles (Question/answer) or mini-dialogues

PROCEDURES:

1. Preliminary research -- begin to make a mental note of questions people frequently ask you. (i.e. What is your family name. Where do you come from? Are you American? Are you married? Where do you live? Have you been here for a long time? etc.) Decide on a series of four or five questions and answers you would like to be able to use.

2. Ask the informant to say one of the answers to a common question (for example, I live in town). Listen carefully .

3. Repeat the sentence several times after the informant, indicating that you want him to correct your pronunciation.

4. Indicate that you want your informant to ask you the question which would evoke the answer you have just repeated.

5. Answer the teacher's question, using the new structure.

6. Ask the informant to repeat the question several times - listen carefully.

7. Repeat the question several times, indicating that you want the informant to correct your pronunciation.

8. Ask the informant the new question, indicating by your intonation that you really want him to answer.

9. Practice asking others in the class (if you are working in a group).

10. Follow the same procedure for each question. Answer each one until you have a dialogue of three or four exchanges.

11. Recite the dialogue several times with your informant, acting out the conversation and using appropriate gestures.

12. Ask the informant to repeat the entire series slowly. Copy the question-answer cycles using your own phonetic script. (See A Guide to Language Learning in the Field by Arthur Levy for a more detailed description of how to note cycles.)

13. Read the cycles back to your informant, indicating that you want him to correct your pronunciation.

14. Repeat the cycles once without looking at your notes.

15. Outside of class, practice these new questions and answers in real situations.

16. Study your notes that same day. Learn questions and answers by heart.

17. During the next class, review the cycles by acting out the dialogue.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N°3

SUBJECT: Question Words

OBJECTIVES:

- To increase the type and number of questions you are capable of asking.

TECHNIQUE: Grouping parts of speech.

PROCEDURES:

1. Identify and make a list of all the question words (who, what, where, when, why, etc.) you have learned to recognize to date. This word grouping will be the basis for your lesson.

2. Indicate to your informant that you would like him to ask you a question using a question word that you choose from your list.

3. Listen carefully and then repeat the question several times, indicating that you want the informant to correct your pronunciation.

4. Ask the informant to formulate other questions using the same question words.

5. For each question listen carefully and repeat, until you begin to feel comfortable with structures that follow the question word.

6. Note down one model question for the question word, reading it back for pronunciation correction.

7. During the course of the lesson present three or four other question words and follow the same procedure until you have a list of five or six questions.

8. Wherever possible, organize the questions in some logical order and pose them to the informant.

9. Note his answers and when you have finished the questions series, go back over the list of answers asking for explanation of words you do not understand and having informant correct your pronunciation.

10. Have the informant ask you the same questions. Based on the models provided by the informant's answers, try to formulate your own answers to the questions. Have the informant correct your pronunciation and structures.

11. Make a list of your corrected answers to the questions. Read them and have the informant correct your pronunciation.

12. Learn your questions and answers by heart outside of class.

13. Use your new questions outside of class as you meet new people.

14. Review questions and answers without notes during your next session.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 4

SUBJECT: Receiving a Visitor

In much of traditional Africa, visiting is an important factor in human relationships. The visitor honors the home of the person he is visiting and the host owes the visitor his time and attention.

OBJECTIVES:

To learn simple structures and accepted procedures for receiving visitors.

TECHNIQUE: Create a situation

PROCEDURES:

1. Using props, visual aids and pantomime, create a situation indicating to the informant that he is receiving guests in his home.

2. Have him sit down. Go to the door, knock and enter, greet him -- then encourage him to continue (sit down, something to drink -- observe his gestures, physical contact, proximity, facial expressions, does he rise or remain seated, etc.)

3. Have him repeat the scene and the things he said several times. Listen carefully.

4. Repeat after the informant, one sentence at a time, indicating that you want him to correct you.

5. Change places with the informant. Try to reuse the vocabulary you have just learned, imitating gestures you observed.

6. Repeat the same scene. Observe his gestures in entering (does he knock, clap, smile, extend the hand, bow? does he come towards you or does he expect you to come towards him, etc.)

7. Replay the scene several times -- changing from the role of visitor to that of host.

8. Ask the informant to repeat again, this time copying down what he is saying, using your own phonetic script.

9. Read back what you have written and have the informant correct you.

10. Repeat once again after the informant without looking at your notes.

11. Ask about visiting protocol. If appropriate, visit a friend or acquaintance in his home. Try out your greetings. Observe the hospitality.

12. Study your notes that same day.

13. Review the new structures during your next class, recreating the guest situation.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 5

SUBJECT: Everyday Objects

PART I

OBJECTIVES:

- To learn the words for things that you will be seeing and using frequently.
- To learn simple, useful structures that you will need to refer to these objects.

TECHNIQUES: Using objects as visual aids

PROCEDURES:

1. Gather eight or ten familiar objects and show them to your informant.

2. Indicate to the informant that you want to ask: "What is this?" Listen carefully and repeat. Have the informant correct your pronunciation.

3. In response to the question, have the informant identify each object. Listen carefully and repeat after the informant having him correct your pronunciation. Continue the process until you are able to identify all of the objects without help from the informant.

4. Hide or cover one of the objects and indicate to the informant that you want to ask: "Where is the X?" Have him pronounce the question for you. Listen carefully and repeat. The informant corrects your pronunciation.

5. Hide or cover other objects and ask the same question, using the word for the hidden object. "Where is the Y?" In some languages, objects of different natures or classes require different types of questions. Note carefully when the informant indicates that the same question does not apply.

6. Pay special attention to the informant's answer when he says:" Here it is" or "The X is here". Repeat the answer until you feel comfortable with it.

7. Have the informant ask you about the whereabouts of different objects and try to answer using the same structure: "Here it is" or "The Z is here".

8. Make a list of the objects and of the question and answer structures. Read them having the informant correct your pronunciation.

9. Now, expand the exercise by changing the position of the objects and examining the terms used to indicate proximity. Check the difference between:

Here it is

There it is

There it is, way over there

Listen carefully and repeat. Have the informant correct your pronunciation.

10. Manipulate the objects to use as many of the structures with as many of the objects as possible. Alternate asking and answering questions with the informant.

11. Copy the different answers. Read them having the informant correct your pronunciation.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 5 (Continued)

PART II

1. Review the objects learned in previous lessons as well as the questions "Where is X" and the possible answers.

2. Indicate to the informant that you want to say: " Give me the X "
Observe carefully and initiate appropriate expressions and gestures for giving and receiving (Do you offer with one hand or two? Right or left? Do you receive with your right hand, left hand or both How do you acknowledge receipt? Is there a word for "thank you?". Is it used in this situation?)

3. Practice the new sentence using different objects: Give me the X
Give me the Y, etc.

4. By pointing to another person or to the picture of another person, indicate to the informant that you want to say: Give him the X.
Listen carefully and repeat. Repeat the same procedure to learn the sentences Give her, us, them... Listen carefully and repeat.

5. Indicate various objects and people (or visual aids representing people) to allow you to practice the sentences: Give me (them, him, her, us, etc.) the X.

6. Note the different forms. Read them having the informant correct any inaccuracies in pronunciation.

7. Demonstrate possession by holding one of the objects close to you and indicating to the informant that you want to say: I have an X.
Listen carefully and repeat.

8. Practice the new sentence: I have an X by substituting various objects for X and repeating the sentence I have a Y, I have a Z, etc.

9. Follow the same procedure for the other persons: You, He, She, We, They, etc.

10. When you feel comfortable with the conjugation of "to have", note down a series of model sentences: I have an X,
You have a Y
He has, etc.
Read and have the informant correct your pronunciation.

11. Follow the same process for the question: Do you have an X?
Does he (she) have etc.
as well as for the negation I don't have an X
He doesn't etc.

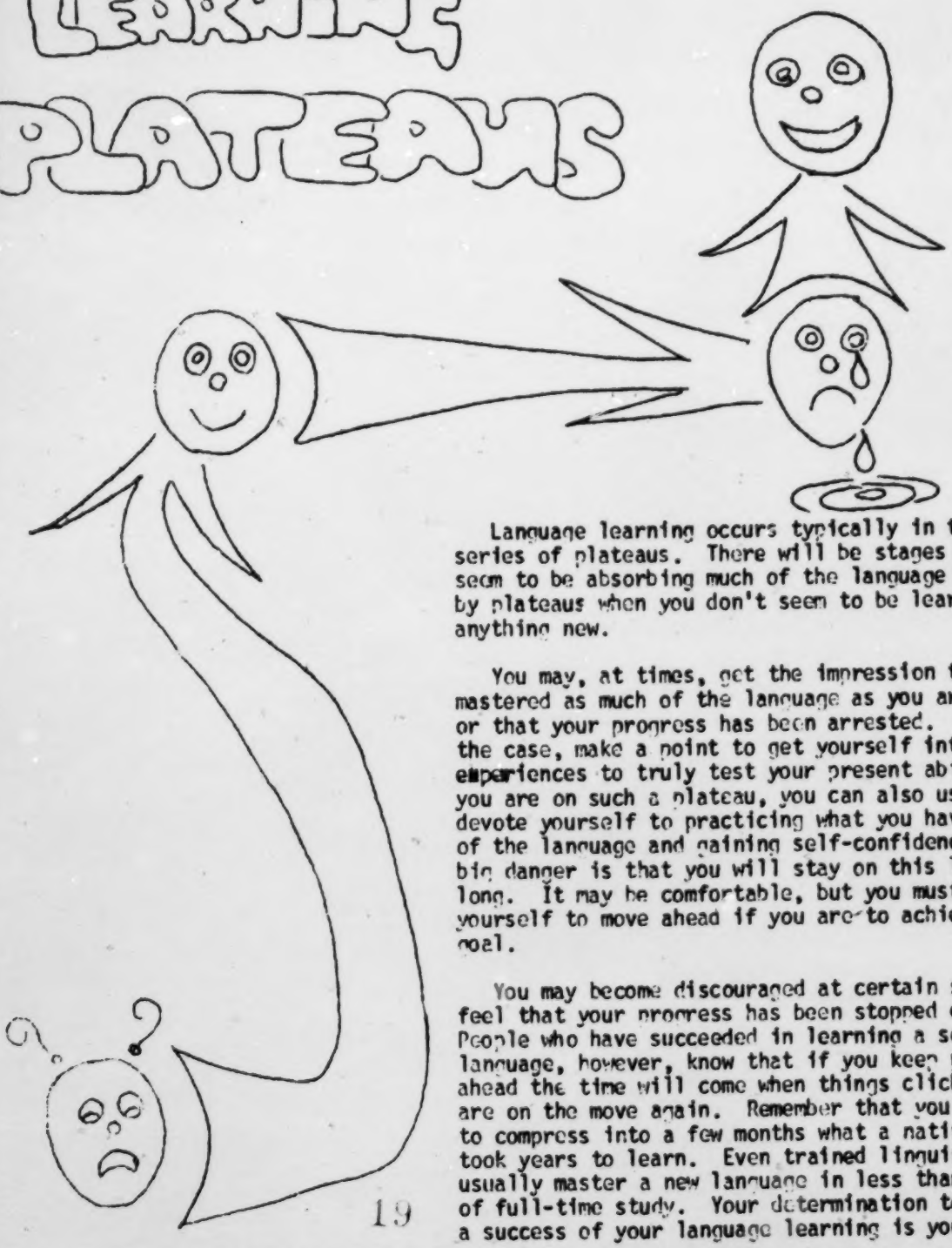
12. Another possible expansion of the objects involves the examination of singular and plural forms. This requires having two or three of the same props.
Elicit contrasting sentences: Here is the X? Here it is
Here are the X's? Here they are.

13. For each sentence follow the process of repetition, correction, practice and copying.

14. Learn all the forms by heart and look for occasions to use them out of class.

Excerpts from "Where Do I Go From Here?" by Marguerite and Charles Kraft

LEARNING PLATEAUS



Language learning occurs typically in terms of a series of plateaus. There will be stages when you seem to be absorbing much of the language followed by plateaus when you don't seem to be learning anything new.

You may, at times, get the impression that you've mastered as much of the language as you are able or that your progress has been arrested. If this is the case, make a point to get yourself into new experiences to truly test your present ability. While you are on such a plateau, you can also usefully devote yourself to practicing what you have absorbed of the language and gaining self-confidence. The big danger is that you will stay on this level too long. It may be comfortable, but you must force yourself to move ahead if you are to achieve your goal.

You may become discouraged at certain stages and feel that your progress has been stopped completely. People who have succeeded in learning a second language, however, know that if you keep pushing ahead the time will come when things click and you are on the move again. Remember that you are trying to compress into a few months what a native speaker took years to learn. Even trained linguists don't usually master a new language in less than two years of full-time study. Your determination to make a success of your language learning is your best ally.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 6

SUBJECT: Using local currency

In the process of buying things you need to survive, you will meet salesmen and market women whom you will be seeing frequently. They are likely to use the same structures each time you meet, often asking the same questions and responding in the same way. Since the process of buying often includes bargaining and discussion, these people represent good language models and rich sources of structures and commonly used, useful expressions.

OBJECTIVES:

-- To learn terms for local currency
-- To learn to count money in the local language
-- To learn to ask for and understand the price of an article.

TECHNIQUE: Using objects as visual aids

PROCEDURES:

1. Place five or six coins of different denominations on the table. Ask the informant to identify each coin -- listen carefully.

2. Repeat several times after the informant indicating that you want him to correct your pronunciation.

3. Continue repeating until you are able to identify each coin accurately without the help of the informant.

4. Place four or five of the same object on the table (four pens, four oranges, four books). Ask the informant to identify the object (singular and plural). Repeat after the informant.

5. Place one coin next to one article. Elicit the appropriate response from the informant (e.g. one orange costs 25 francs). Listen carefully and repeat several times, indicating that you want the informant to correct your pronunciation.

6. Elicit the expression "How much" or "How much does it cost" from the informant. Listen carefully. Observe hand gestures appropriate for asking a question.

7. Practice these new structures, using different numbers of objects and coins, and the new structures: How much? It (one orange, two oranges) cost(s) 25 francs (50, 75) etc.

8. Ask the informant to repeat structures seen in the lesson and copy them using your own phonetic script...
   - denomination of coins
   - objects (singular, plural)
   - How much (does it cost)?
   - It costs _____ francs

9. Read what you have written, having the informant correct your pronunciation.

10. Repeat the new materials and structures again without referring to your notes.

11. Outside of class, price articles which interest you, using the local language.

12. Study your notes that same day.

13. Review the new structures in your next class. To make the review more interesting, bring other objects to class. After having the informant identify them in the local language, repeat and use these new objects to review vocabulary for currency and accompanying structures learned during the previous session.

14. Expand the exercise using larger denominations until you begin to feel comfortable handling the money.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 7

SUBJECT: Bargaining

Bargaining is often an accepted, expected part of shopping in many parts of Africa. As an American, you are thought to be rich by many of the people from whom you will be buying and this preconception of theirs will often affect the bargaining procedure, prices asked, and willingness to come down in price. As with any other social exchanges, there are accepted polite prodedures and structures for bargaining which are both socially important and financially profitable to master.

OBJECTIVE: To learn to bargain in a culturally appropriate way.

TECHNIQUE: Creating a dialogue

PROCEDURES:

1. Research -- Find out where, when and by whom bargaining is appropriate.

2. Observe bargaining, paying special attention to gestures, expressions, and atmosphere (playful, angry, teasing, etc)

3. Working with your informant, create a dialogue between two characters including asking a price, indicating that it is too expensive, etc. Write down the exchanges as you go, using your own phonetic script. Limit your dialogue to a maximum of four exchanges (eight lines).

4. Read back the dialogue line by line having the informant correct your pronunciation.

5. Choose one of the characters, and repeating after your informant without referring to your notes, learn that role by heart.

6. Act out the dialogue playing the role you learned. Dramatize as you go to make the dialogue/role play more interesting and to work on intonation.

7. Learn the second role as in Step 5, and act out the dialogue a second time as in Step 6.

8. After class, go to the market and bargain for something you would really like to buy. (It is a good idea to have an approximate idea of an appropriate price to pay before you go.)

9. Study your notes that same day.

10. Act out the dialogue again in class the next day as a review. (Play each role once.)

11. Experiment with changing the atmosphere of your original dialogue from friendly to hostile, teasing to encouraging, etc. By imitating your informant, attempt to master intonation and gesture changes that you can use to appropriately express your emotions in a given situation.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 2

SUBJECT: Developping a subject of your choice

OBJECTIVE: To expand vocabulary and structures you control

TECHNIQUE: *Using pictures -- one of the easiest informant techniques mainly because the length of the informant's description is easily controlled and new vocabulary is completely explained by the pictures content.

PROCEDURES:

1. Choose a picture that represents an interesting, relevant topic or vocabulary and structures you would like to be able to manipulate.

2. Show the infromant the picture. Ask him for a short description of what he sees (four or five sentences). Have him indicate aspects of the picture as he speaks.

3. Ask the informant to repeat the same explanation three or four times. Listen carefully.

4. Try to repeat as much of the irformant's explanation as possible. If you get stuck, have the informant repeat the explanation sentence by sentence.

5. Repeat the sentences until the entire explanation is mastered.

6. Record the description under the picture in your own phonetic script. Read the sentences and have the informant correct your pronunciation.

7. Study the description. Learn it by heart.

8. During the next session, review the lesson by reciting the description, referring to the pictures, but without referring to your notes.

* Adapted from Monolingual Informant Techniques for Peace Corps Volunteers by Judith Reinstein

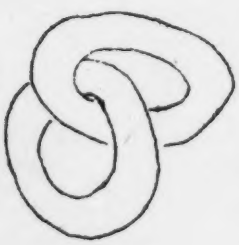
Excerpts from "Where Do I Go From Here?" by Marguerite and Charles Kraft

WHAT IF THE NEW LANGUAGE DOES NOT STICK?

Language learning is often much like pouring paint through a sieve. If you continue pouring and pouring, eventually some of it hardens around the edges and fills in some of the holes so your sieve will hold the paint. In a language learning situation, some can memorize quickly, others require much effort with complex mental association necessary to make things stick. The result depends primarily on the motivation, persistence and practice of the language learner, not upon his natural ability to learn in one way or another. The fact that all of us have learned at least one language well is evidence that we are able to learn another.

Some words and expressions for some unknown reason simply stick in your mind. These you will, almost without effort, be able to hear, think, and use often and so you will not have to waste much energy trying to remember them. There are other expressions which do not readily stick in your mind, however, and will need to be somehow reinforced to keep them there. If you can use your imagination, you can establish association links which act as scaffolding and are necessary until you have learned to use the new expression.

Some words can be learned by associating a known English word with the new word, e.g., hazo is Hausa meaning mist is close enough to the English haze to be easily associated and remembered. Other words may be retained by associating them with persons with that characteristic, e.g., perezoso in Spanish meaning "lazy" will be more easily retained, perhaps if you are able to associate it with a particular person possessing this characteristic whom your mind's eye will picture whenever you hear the word. You may want to jot the person's name in pencil on the back of your vocabulary slip until you have learned the meaning of the word and can use it without thinking first of the person. Then erase the association link for it is no longer needed.



Associations may be established through words from any familiar language (not just English) which sound and /or mean something similar to the word you are working on in the language you are learning. Often you cannot find a strong association (one very much like the word you are trying to remember in sound or meaning) and will have to take a more round-about method of remembering. In an article on language learning, Dr. Reyburn gives the following Pulu-English illustrations of this method, nkel meaning hill associated with coal since one digs coal out of hills; or manc, meaning to finish, can be remembered by thinking -- I've managed to finish. As long as your association is sufficient to bring the word into your mind without wasting much time, it is a useful one. As you regularly take this round-about route, you'll find now and then a step drops out and eventually the word will come without the round-about way of thinking.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N°9

SUBJECT: Learning Common Verbs

OBJECTIVE: To learn to manipulate a series of frequently used verbs in different persons and tenses.

TECHNIQUE: Using a series of actions -- placing verbs in a logical series often serves as a memory aid when learning a new language.

PROCEDURE:

1. Working with your informant, make up a list of no more than twelve things you or he does each day in sequence (I wake up, go to the john, wash, get dressed, etc.). Explain the action to your informant either through translation or pantomime. Write these actions using your own phonetic script.

2. Read back the list line by line having the informant correct your pronunciation.

3. Without referring to your notes, repeat the first four actions after your informant until you can repeat them easily without hesitation or mistakes.

4. When you feel comfortable using the first four verbs, continue on to the next group of four (as in Step 3).

5. Try to recite the first eight verbs without hesitation or mistakes. (If the list seems too long to handle, Chapter 16 in "Where Do I Go From Here" by Marguerite and Charles Kraft, p. 65 might be encouraging. What if the new language does not stick?) After being encouraged by the Krafts, try to apply the principles of association to the final group of four sentences, until you have mastered the entire sequence of 12 sentences.

6. During the next session, review the series of actions and using photos or gestures have the informant change the "person" (e.g. if the sentences read "I get up, I get washed, etc.", change to "He gets up, he gets washed, etc.) If the changes in person do not entail significant changes in the verb, try to master the whole series of twelve at once. If, on the other hand, the verbs change significantly, study the new sequence, four verbs at a time, until you have mastered all 12, and then copy them down, verifying with your informant.

7. Continue to exploit this basic list changing to other "persons" (we, they, you-singular/plural, etc.). In order to keep the person you are referring to straight in your mind, it is useful to use gestures to indicate "I", "We", etc., as you speak. (Be careful though, pointing is considered impolite and even hostile in some cultures.)

8. During a third and fourth session, this exercise can be expanded to deal with tenses by learning tag words from your informant such as:

now today yesterday
tomorrow last year...

Work through the series of actions using different tag words to get an idea of the sturcture of tenses or aspects of the language. Do not ask your informant to identify the "tense" involved. "Do not expect your language assistant to describe the structure...of his language to you..."(M. and C. Kraft: Where Do I Go From Here?)

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 10

SUBJECT: Performing a Specific Task

It is important to remember that understanding a culture is necessary for accomplishing specific technical tasks. It is also important to remember that you have specific technical tasks to accomplish, and that your credibility often depends on how well you perform these tasks.

OBJECTIVE: To learn a series of verbs and vocabulary related to the performance of a specific technical task.

TECHNIQUE*: Using a "How To" or task oriented situation. Basing your lesson on a specific technical task obviously relevant to your work adds impetus for quick assimilation of structures and vocabulary. Because task oriented situations deal with actions, they provide excellent practice in verb usage. Because the task may involve props as well as action, vocabulary is completely defined. Because only one task is described, vocabulary on one topic is expanded.

PROCEDURE:

1. Choose a task or process related to your life or job that you need to learn to perform. For ex.: How to dig a well, how to cultivate a field, how to prepare a local dish, etc.

2. The lesson is greatly enriched if you can provide props, objects, and visual aids so that the informant can demonstrate the process or task he is explaining.

3. Ask the question: How do you dig a well? (for ex.) or How does one dig a well? Ask the informant to show you as he speaks.

4. Let the informant demonstrate and explain the entire process two or three times. Listen carefully trying to associate words with actions and objects.

5. Request another repetition of the explanation this time stopping the informant after units of two or three sentences -- which you attempt to repeat. The informant corrects your pronunciation.

6. Continue this process until you can explain and demonstrate the entire process.

7. Copy the explanation in your own phonetic script, read back the explanation and have the teacher correct your pronunciation.

8. Study and learn the explanation by heart that same day.

9. The next day, review the explanation, reciting it to your informant and having him correct.

10. With the help of your informant, expand the explanation by transforming it into other tenses: Imperative, future, past, etc. Repeat and copy.

11. Practice your explanation in a real situation.

* Adapted from Monolingual Informant Techniques for Peace Corps Volunteers by Judith Reinstein

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 11

SUBJECT: Developing a subject of your choice

OBJECTIVES: To learn nouns and verbs relative to a specific subject or technical skill.

TECHNIQUE: Dessin-o-con (developed by John Rassias, Dartmouth College).

PROCEDURE:

1. Choose one specific subject that interests you (for ex. a technical subject like well-digging).

2. Divide a blank page into six equal squares. Think of six objects related to the subject chosen (a shovel, ciment, re-rod, buse, pulley and water). Make a rough sketch of each of the objects.

3. Identify each drawing for your informant, and have him supply the appropriate word. Write the name of the object under the picture including the article (the or a). Have the informant repeat each word. Listen carefully and repeat.

4. Make sentences with each of the objects and have the teacher correct you.

5. For each drawing, make a list of questions and answers. Have the teacher correct your pronunciation and structures.

6. Ask him the questions and have him answer.

7. Have him ask you the questions and you answer (construct a negative as well as a positive answer for each question and practice them).

8. Based on the structures learned in your sentences, questions and answers, begin to compose a paragraph based on the series of objects. Create your "story" sentence by sentence first orally, then on paper (or preferably on a blackboard if one is available). Limit your text to a maximum of six lines.

9. Read the text as you have written it. Have the teacher correct your pronunciation.

10. Slowly erase or block out words in each line (first nouns, then verbs, then adjectives, etc.) reading the text after each series of erasures. Continue until the entire text has been erased and you can recite the six lines without the aid of the informant or the written text.

11. As a final review, have the informant ask you questions about the text.

12. Outside of class, use the new vocabulary in a real situation.

13. Review the text during the following session before going on to something new.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 12

SUBJECT: Ceremonies

In many so called underdeveloped countries, the needs of the group, family or community often take precedence over the needs of the individual. The importance accorded to birth, circumcision, marriage, death and holiday ceremonies which often involve carefully prescribed rituals and large numbers of people are an expression of this communal spirit. Structuring your informant's discussions of such ceremonies allows you to reap a double harvest -- increased language skills and a deeper understanding of the people and their customs. If you learn to participate actively in what is important to a people, whenever possible and appropriate, you, too, become important to them...

OBJECTIVES: To learn about a specific communal ceremony
To learn vocabulary and linguistic structures appropriate for this ceremony.

TECHNIQUE: Structuring a lesson through questions

PROCEDURES:

1. Create a situation for your informant, using real characters known to both of you, for example: "Alioune's wife gave birth to a baby boy".

2. Ask the informant the name of the ceremony that follows the birth. Listen carefully, repeat and note.

3. Nouns - Ask the informant to list and describe the objects necessary for this ceremony. Listen carefully and repeat after the informant and note.

4. Ask the informant what people (relatives, friends, officials, etc) will be involved in the ceremony either as participants or guests. Listen carefully, repeat and make a list of the people involved.

5. Verbs - Ask the informant to describe what will be done at the ceremony, in order if possible. Have him explain how each object listed will be used and what each person listed will do (his/her role). Listen carefully, repeat and note.

6. Expressions - Using miniature role play have the informant act out and explain what different people will say to each other on this occasion. Listen carefully, repeat and note.

7. Adjectives - Ask the informant to describe what constitutes a good ceremony Listen carefully for adjectives (like good, tasty, plentiful, etc). Repeat and note.

7. Summary - Try to describe the entire ceremony to your informant, referring as little as possible to your notes. Have the informant correct your structural errors and pronunciation.

9. Write a short paragraph with the help of your informant, outlining everything that has been said about the ceremony. Read the text and have the informant correct your pronunciation.

10. Study your notes and memorize the text.

11. During the following session, describe the ceremony without referring to your notes.

12. Attend a real ceremony; observe what is happening and try to use the vocabulary and expressions you have learned.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 13

SUBJECT: Developing a subject of your choice

OBJECTIVE: To expand the vocabulary and structures you possess

TECHNIQUE: Micro-Con (developed by John Rassias, Dartmouth College)

This technique uses a strict timing device to structure the lesson and limit the vocabulary and structures presented. A watch with a second hand or a timer of some kind is essential for this technique.

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask your informant to speak to you for exactly one minute on a topic that interests you. Listen carefully.

2. Have him speak on the same topic a second time - also exactly for one minute (if possible have a third person act as timer). Ask him to try to use as many of the same structures and as much of the same vocabulary as possible.

3. Ask him to repeat a third time - also respecting the one minute limit.

4. Ask the informant questions about words or structures you haven't understood.

5. When you have asked all your questions, have the informant ask you questions about what he has said.

6. Try to repeat, also in the space of one minute exactly what the informant said to you. Try to use the same structures and vocabulary. The informant can help you when you get stuck and correct your pronunciation and grammar.

7. Recording your talk on a cassette recorder if one is available facilitates correction. You can then go over the entire tape with the informant, stopping to repeat as he corrects you.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 14

SUBJECT: Folklore

Folktales are the depository of the rules, and wisdom of a culture. As your language ability increases, you can begin to tap this rich source of structures and cultural insight.

OBJECTIVES: -To learn about the history and values of the new culture;
-To enrich your comprehension of the language
-To enrich your spoken language

TECHNIQUE: Telling a story
Listening to a story

PROCEDURE:

1. Choose an American folktale and attempt to tell the story to the informant in the local language.

2. Encourage the informant to correct your mistakes and ask questions as you speak by periodically asking him if he understands.

3. Recording your story on a cassette tape recorder as you speak is particularly useful for corrections. Play back the entire tape, having the teacher correct you as you go.

4. Note the major corrections and study them after the class.

5. Ask your informant to tell you a folktale from his culture.

6. Listen carefully, asking questions as he goes. Note new words and expressions.

7. Study the list after class.

8. As a review, the next day, attempt to tell the informant the story he told you.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUES

What does that mean?

In trying to pin down the meaning of a new word, translation can help but it can also lead to real difficulty and frustration. A sure danger signal to watch for is the rising anger in your throat or the frustration in the pit of your stomach when your informant REFUSES to give you the one word that corresponds in meaning to a given word in English or French.

Chances are he is not doing it to make you angry. The word may simply not cover the same spectrum of meaning as a given English word.

Instead of forcing a definition, create various sentences in which you might use what seems to you to be the equivalent word in your language. Ask your informant if the sentences are valid or not in his language. As you get feedback on each sentence you will slowly narrow or expand the spectrum of meaning of the new word. You may not be able to translate it or you may need two or three words to translate it. But what is important is that you will understand when and under what circumstances to use the word. In a sense, you will FEEL the meaning of the word.

Following are some thoughts on the same or related subjects from "Where Do I Go From Here?" by Marguerite and Charles Kraft.

> Your goal is to respond naturally in the language, so don't insist on a certain combination of words if your assistant doesn't readily accept the phrase. Some, for example, in learning African languages have insisted that they be taught some equivalent of the expression "please", which they could use when asking for something in order to feel that they were being polite. Usually the language assistant has managed to construct some sort of equivalent if pressed for it, but the use of such an expression in the contexts where one would use "please" in English seems quite foreign to the native speakers.

A related problem is that of the use of words or concepts that are frequent in the new language in a way that is like its nearest English equivalent but not like the normal use of that word or concept in the foreign language. Such an occurrence has given rise to a new proverb in the Hausa language of Northern Nigeria. The proverb is: "Watakila (which is commonly translated "maybe") keeps a European from telling a lie." The reference is to the fact that it is common for Europeans to answer "Watakila" rather than "yes" or "no", if they are asked whether or not they intend to do something and they wish to postpone (or avoid) the decision. The reason for the proverb (which is rather sarcastic) is that while "maybe" or "perhaps" is the intended answer, and often times these are possible translations for watakila, a Hausa person using watakila in this context would wish to convey a high degree of probability rather than a low degree of possibility. The European, however, using the Hausa word as if it were the exact equivalent of the English "maybe" in order to avoid telling a lie, is actually guilty of quite seriously misrepresenting his intentions. A good language assistant can help you prevent such misunderstandings.

In addition to obtaining assistance with the pronunciation of these utterances from your language assistant, you should discuss the contexts in which each of the phrases is employed in order to get a firm grip on the meanings of the utterances you are learning. If you learn to approach the investigation of meaning in the new language by obtaining illustrative examples of this nature (which should then be noted on your vocabulary slips) from your language assistant, rather than by simply asking for translation of the phrases,, you will find yourself gaining a great "feel" for meanings.

When you seek to discover new expressions, it is more rewarding and less likely to lead you into the type of misuse of the language illustrated in the preceding chapter if you "set a scene" for your assistant rather than simply asking him how to say such-and-such in his language. Ask him, for example, what he might say to put across a certain idea in a given situation.

By setting the scene for him in this way, you will be more likely to get a natural response in his language and better learn how to talk about your experiences in his language and in terms of his world.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 15

SUBJECT: Values

Abstract terms like "honesty", "pride" and "courage" when discussed in terms of concrete examples often provide you with profound insights into the new culture.

OBJECTIVES:
- To learn what qualities are valued in the new culture
- To increase your ability to use and understand abstract terms

TECHNIQUE: Researching abstract terms

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask your informant to talk about the type of person that is admired in his society.

2. When he seems to have found a fitting example ask him what qualities this person is said to have.

3. Repeat this process several times, dealing also with people who are not respected.

4. Make a list of abstract terms which describe common qualities and faults.

5. Working with one word at a time verify the pronunciation of the word and ask the informant to attempt to give you a general definition.

6. Once you have the definition of the term, try to situate the spectrum of meaning it covers by proposing examples of situations in which you feel it could logically be used as seen from your limited understanding of the word and through your cultural perspective. Have the informant either approve or qualify your statement.
   Ex.: Yes the word would be used in that situation
   or No, one would have to do X or Y for the term to be used in that context,
   etc.

7. Ask the teacher for at least two examples of situations in which a person would be complimented for possessing this abstract quality. Note new words and expressions.

8. Ask the teacher for at least two examples of situations in which a person would be criticised for not having this quality.

9. Ask the informant to describe restrictions on the use of the word -- a case in which it would absolutely not be used (for example - in Senegal one would definitely not tell a new mother that her baby is beautiful).

10. Listen for these abstract words in conversation.

11. Try to use them as appropriate situations present themselves and keep your ears open for feedback.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 16

SUBJECT: Developing a subject of your choice

OBJECTIVES: -To expand the vocabulary and structures you possess

TECHNIQUE: Translation

PROCEDURES:

1. Find simple booklets or articles on subjects of interest to you. Books designed for beginners in basic French or English are ideal for this type of session. They usually contain colorful visual aids and present simple structures.

2. Try to translate small units of three or four sentences orally into the target language. Have the informant correct your pronunciation.

3. Repeat each unit of three or four sentences after the informant several times until you are able to recite it perfectly without help or correction.

4. Note the three or four sentences in your own phonetic script. Read them back to your informant and have him correct your pronunciation.

5. Proceed in the same way by small units until you complete the book or chapter that interests you.

6. After each group of 12-15 sentences, stop for a review. Have the informant ask you questions about the contents, and have him correct your answers.

7. Ask the informant questions about the contents and have him answer. When you feel comfortable with the review, go on to another set of sentences.

INFORMANT TECHNIQUE N° 17

SUBJECT. Developing a subject of your choice

OBJECTIVES:
- To generate original sentences
- To express ideas and improve spoken language
- To improve comprehension

TECHNIQUE: Free conversation

Unless the informant is encouraged to correct your mistakes, this technique may be interesting but not fruitful in improving language patterns.

PROCEDURES:

1. Choose a subject of interest to you and to the informant and begin a discussion.

2. Untrained informants tend to get so interested in the subject matter that they do not correct properly. If you have a cassette recorder available, it would be useful to record sections of the discussion having the informant correct your pronunciation and structures.

3. When the informant corrects you, repeat the new sentence several times.

4. If the informant corrects a structure or pattern, try to transform the new sentence into a question and into a negative sentence. If vocabulary has been corrected, try to re-use the word in another context.

5. Try as many different sentences with the correction as you can think of without losing the train of the conversation.

6. With each correction, note down any new structure or vocabulary for further study. At the end of the lesson, read these sentences back to the informant and have him correct your pronunciation.

7. Study the list of corrections and reuse them outside of class.

8. During your next class, review the new vocabulary and structures before continuing.

APPENDIX

A GUIDE FOR LANGUAGE STUDY IN THE FIELD

BY ARTHUR LEVY

When setting out to learn a third language or when building upon a language in which you already have some proficiency, it is often helpful to prepare a written outline of topics for study.

I hope that the following outline will help you in drawing up your own program of language study. The outline presented is merely a guide. It will be up to you to determine what aspect of it is relevant to the language you will be studying. You will also have to decide on the proper order for presenting material, both thematic and grammatical.

No matter what order of presentation you decide on, please remember that you will learn much more quickly if the material you use has direct bearing on your day to day existence.

Outline for Material Preparation

1. Instructional tools:
   Learn how to say the following:
   A. Repeat
   B. Slowly please
   C. How do you say _____?
   D. Is this correct?

2. Greetings (General)
   A. Morning
   B. Afternoon
   C. Evening

3. Name
   A. My name is _____.
      What is your name?
   B. His (her) name is _____.
      What is his (her) name?

4. Place of Origin
   A. I am from _____.
      Where are you from?

For example, after having mastered the present tense with several high frequency verbs, should you go on to the past tense (and sometimes there are two past tenses) or to the future tense or both?

. . .

5. Nationality (with the negative)
   A. I am an American.
      Are you an American?
   B. No, I am not an Englishman.
      Are you an Englishman?

6. Common Objects (with the negative)
   A. Yes, this is a pen.
      Is this a pen?
   B. No, this is not a book, this is a pen.
      Is this a book?

7. Numbers with Objects
   A. This is one pen, these are two pens, these are three pens, etc.
      How many pens? (the informant can ask you this while holding up a certain number of pens).
   B. When dealing with Bantu languages, always try to take three or four objects from one noun class rather than mixing nouns from several different classes together.

8. Time telling

9. Days of the week and the date
   A. Today is Monday.
      What day are we?
   B. Today is Monday the 25th of March.
      What is today's date?

10. Foods with the verb "to have".
   A. Yes, I have some meat.
      Do you have any meat?
   B. Yes, I have some pineapples.
      Do you have any pineapples?

11. Directions
   A. To get from here to the market you...
      How do I get from here to the market?

12. Bargaining at the market.
   A. Buying and selling, etc...

13. Climate
   A. The weather today is...
      What is the weather like today?

14. Biography
   A. I was born on May 10, 1946.
      What is your birthdate?
   B. I was born in Boulder, Colorado.
      Where were you born?

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Monolingual Informant Techniques for Peace Corps Volunteers

July 11, 1968
Office of Planning,
Program Review and
Research, Division of
Language Training

" Monolingual Informant Techniques for Peace Corps Volunteers " was written by Judith Beinstein, former language coordinator in Indian Languages, with an introduction by Joan Markessinis, Peace Corps Language Training Office.

Monolingual Informant Techniques for Peace Corps Volunteers

An Aspect of Continued Language Learning In-Country

I. INTRODUCTION

Techniques for learning the sounds and structures of a language, especially unwritten, from native speakers of the language, usually pedagogically unskilled and often unlettered, have long been part of modern descriptive linguistics. But the Peace Corps has only recently recognized their value. Where Do I Go From Here? by Charles H. and Marguerite E. Kraft devotes one section to Peace Corps Volunteer use of language informants. It was the first such study supported by the Peace Corps. Most recently, these techniques have been ably described by Judith Beinstein, former Language Coordinator in Indian Languages. Although originally developed for Peace Corps Volunteers in India, they are universally applicable. Their purpose is to allow PCVs to:

continue language learning in the field without trained teachers;

avoid the pitfall of talking about language through involved grammatical discourse with local "scholars";

develop their own materials concentrating on problems peculiar to their dialect area and job when texts, especially drills and exercises, are unavailable;

create varied and interesting learning sessions for both Volunteer and informant.

Ideally, Volunteers should be taught these techniques during training, so that they may eventually take over several classes a week. Bestowing such increasing responsibility on trainees as the program concludes facilities transition from training to field. In the field, the Volunteer's success with informants depends on complete control of the learning situation and a proficiency level of at least an S-1+.

Following are Judy Beinstein's monolingual informant techniques, which are sequenced from highly structured to unstructured. The working language is Hindi. All may be used singly or in combination. They by no means exhaust all possible methodologies, however; Volunteers should experiment with new methods of eliciting information once these are mastered.

II. WORKING WITH LANGUAGE INFORMANTS

1. Question Words

This technique is most effective at the beginning of informant work. Later, it should be used periodically to drill question and answer patterns.

The Volunteer begins the lesson:

I will say some words.
(You) use each word in a question.

The first word is _____.

All words given the informant are question words like:

what
who
where
when
etc...

After the informant has devised his question, the Volunteer repeats it until he understands and can say it with ease. When a word in the question is not understod and cannot be demonstrated by action or object, the Volunteer should ask that the word be used in a sentence:

Use the word _____in another sentence.

The informant should continue substituting the word in sentences until its meaning is clear. Once the question has been mastered and recorded, the next question word can be given.

The next word is _____.

The informant should continue to make up questions with different question words until the Volunteer has learned and written down several. Once all questions are recorded, the Volunteer should return to and ask the informant the first recorded question. Then, the informant should answer the question.

Now I will ask you these questions.

And you give the answers.

The Volunteer should master and write down the statements to all questions. Afterwards, the Volunteer should ask the informant to question him. Now the Volunteer must make up his own answers.

Now you ask me the questions.

And I will give the answers.

Once the question and answer patterns have been learned, Volunteers should, on their own time, write similar questions and answers, substituting different nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs to be drilled in the next lesson. For example, the question, "What do you see," and its answer, "I see a small boy playing," form the following drill:

TOPICS NOT CONDUCIVE TO THE CYCLE APPROACH

There are some topics which are not conducive to cycle writing. Greetings and direction giving are two of these areas. Greetings are usually patterns that must be learned by rote and accepted. Directions are usually best learned by acquiring a few key phrases:

i.e. Turn to the right.
Turn to the left.
Go straight.
Walk _____meters, kilometers.
Cross the bridge.
Follow the foot path to _____.
etc.

Then the question.

How do I get from _____to _____?

Then the response which will consist of several related sentences. These sentences will include many of the key phrases you have learned by rote.

One Last Bit of Advice

PLEASE REMEMBER: EXPOSURE, DRILL AND USE IN LIVE SITUATION ARE INFINITELY MORE IMPORTANT THAN UNDERSTANDING GRAMMAR!!!!

M2 What do you want? (question for one person).
What does he want?
What does she want?
What do you want? (question for more than one person).
What do they want?

C1 A. What do you want? (question for one person).
B. I want some beer.
A. What does he want?
B. He wants some beer.
A. What does she want?
B. She wants some beer.
A. What do you want? (question for more than one person).
B. We want some beer.
A. What do they want?
B. They want some beer.

(A question with you in it WILL always illicit an answer of I or we. For this reason, you always will appear in the M2 phase of a verb cycle but never in the M1 phase).
(The C2 phase is merely a further elaboration of structure already acquired).

PRESENT CONDITIONAL

M1 If you come every day, your child will be cured.
If you give your child milk, he will be healthy.
If you feed your child ufawantedza, his weigh will increase.
If you take your medicine everyday, you will get well.

M2 Will my child be cured?
Will my child become healthy?
Will my child's weight increase?
Will I get well?

C1 A. Will my child be cured?
B. If you come everyday, your child will be cured.
A. Will my child become healthy?
B. If you give your child milk, he will be healthy.
A. Will my child's weight increase?
B. If you feed your child ufawantedza, his weight will increase.
A. Will I get well?
B. If you take medicine everyday, you will get well.

(This cycle could be varied with the past conditional).

M1 If you would have come everyday, your child would have been well.

M2 Would my child have been cured if I had come everyday?

I suggest that you sit down with your informant and write your own cycles. Use some of the topics that I have suggested on pages one and two to get started. For example, common objects foods with the verb TO HAVE, the verb TO DO, etc.

Try to keep your cycles short and simple. For maximum effectiveness, no sentence should contain more than 5 words. Of course, when you get into more complicated grammatical constructions, like the present and past conditional above, your sentences will get a little longer.

PLACE OF ORIGIN

I come from America.
He comes from Malawi.
She comes from Kenya.

Where do you come from?
Where does he come from?
Where does she come from?

Where do you come from?
I come from America.
Where does he come from?
He comes from Malawi.
Where does she come from?
She comes from Kenya.

This cycle can be varied to include:
What town does he come from?
What country does he come from?
What part of the country does he come from?
(North, South, East, West, Central)

PLACE OF ORIGIN WITH THE NEGATIVE

M1 No, I do not come from England.
No, she does not come from Zanzibar.
No, he does not come from Uganda.

M2 Do you come from England?
Does she come from Zanzibar?
Does he come from Uganda?

C1 A. Do you come from England?
B. No, I do not come from England.
A. Does she come from Zanzibar?
B. No, she does not come from Zanzibar.
A. Does he come from Uganda?
B. No, he does not come from Uganda.

C2 A. Do you come from England?
B. No, I do not come from England, I come from America.
A. Does she come from Zanzibar?
B. No, she does not come from Zanzibar, she comes from Kenya.
A. Does he come from Uganda?
B. No, he does not come from Uganda, he comes from Malawi.

TO WANT

M1 I want some beer. (Tomatoes, tea, coffee).
He wants some beer.
She wants some beer.
We want some beer.
They want some beer.

2. This is a comparatively effortless way to learn new verbs quickly.

B. Another situation would include the explanation of an activity.
1. How to sew a dress (step by step)
2. How to bandage a wound. (again step by step)

REMEMBER

YOUR BASIC OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE MANIPULATION OF ESSENTIAL PATTERNS AND NOT THE ACCUMULATION OF VOCABULARY.

How to Record the Material
You Want to Learn

Half of the time we spend in the new language we are attempting to learn will be spent asking questions (in the language of course), for this reason, the cycle method[1] is particularly useful, especially up through the S 2 (see the self-appraisal check list) level.

A cycle consists of three or four phases. There is the first phase, the M1 which is an affirmative statement. The second phase, the M2 is a question which illicits the affirmative statement in M1. The third phase, the C, is the conversation between the student and the teacher. The teacher asks the question, M2, and the student gives the answer, M. Then they reverse. The student asks the question M2, and the teacher gives the answer, M1. The following are some concrete examples of cycles.

M1 My name is _____.
Her name is _____.
His name is _____.

M2 What is your name?
What is her name?
What is his name?

C1 A. What is your name?
B. My name is _____.
A. What is her name?
B. Her name is _____.
A. What is his name?
B. His name is _____.

DAY OF THE WEEK

Today is Monday.
Today is Tuesday.
Today is Wednesday.
etc...

What day is it today?

A. What day is it today?
B. Today is _____.

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1 Dr. Earl Stevick of the Foreign Service Institute has been very influential in promoting the "cycle method" for teaching language.

10. TO EAT
I eat lunch at 12:30
etc...

11. TO LIKE
I like bananas.
etc...

B. Make sure that the verbs you learn are high frequency. Again, learn them in phrases that you will have occasion to use in your day to day activities.

C. Vary the basic sentences which you associate with each verb (and these should be learned by rote) with different forms, i.e. negative, interrogative, subject and object changes. Refer to the model of the verb TO WANT on page 6 .

D. After mastering most of the verbs you need in the present tense, then go on to learn the verbs (using the same phrases you used when learning the present tense) in the past and future tenses.
i.e. I work as a P.C. Volunteer.
I worked as a P.C. Volunteer.
I will work as a P.C. Volunteer.

E. Frequently tense changes are quite simple. This is particularly true for Bantu languages. When this is the case, you may learn the past and future tenses of a verb you have learned in the present before you master the present tenses of all the commonly used verb. I would always recommend learning at least 4 or 5 present tenses before going on to other tenses, however.

F. Sometimes the only difference in a tense is tone or vowel length. Be sure to imitate your informant exactly, especially when the difference between two tenses seems slight to you.

16. Common Situations or Activities
A. From time to time, let a common situation serve as the theme to your lesson materials. Your daily routine would be such a situation.

1. I get up at 7 o'clock
I wash and I shave at 7:15
I get dressed at 7:30
I eat breakfast at 8:00
I go to work at _____.
I return home for lunch at _____.
I rest from _____to _____.
I teach English from _____to _____.
I visit the clinic at _____.
etc...

15. Verbs

A. Useful high frequency verbs in the present tense.

1. TO GO
   I go to the market. (house, store, school)
   You go to the market.
   He goes to the market.
   She, we, you, they go (goes) to the market.

   Always learn verbs in the context of a meaningful phrase.
   Never just learn I go, you go, he goes, she goes, etc...)

2. TO HAVE
   (Aside from the possessive sense of this verb in terms of things, check for high frequency idiomatic uses of this verb and learn them.)

3. TO WANT (can sometimes be the same verb as TO LIKE).
   I want some beer.
   You want some beer.
   He wants some beer, etc..

4. TO FEEL
   I feel tired. (Lazy, cold, etc.)
   You feel tired.
   He feels tired, etc.
   (this verb often has many idiomatic uses).

5. TO BE
   I am an American.
   You are an American.
   He is, etc...
   (check for the idiomatic uses of this verb. In Bantu languages, the expressions "I am in the room" and "the book is on the table" are expressed differently).

6. TO WORK
   I work as a P.C. Volunteer .
   You work as a P.C. Volunteer.
   He works as a P.C. Volunteer.
   She works as a P.C. Volunteer.
   We work as P.C. Volunteers.
   They work as P.C. Volunteers.

7. TO TEACH
   I teach child care.
   etc...

8. TO NEED
   I need four bandages,
   etc...

9. TO SPEAK
   I speak 2 languages
   etc...

What do you see?	I	see	a small boy playing.
I notice.	You	notice	bullock cart traveling.
we hear.	We	hear	woman selling fruit.
they	They		farmer plowing.

Twelve questions can be made from the question pattern; forty-eight answers can be made from the answer pattern.

2. Pictures

Use of pictures is one of the easiest informant techniques mainly because length of the informant's description is easily controlled and new vocabulary is completely explained by the picture's content. The Volunteer shows the informant a picture and says:

Look at this picture.

Show me and explain what you see in the picture.

Tell me in four or five sentences.

The Volunteer should then let the informant talk about the pictures and repeat his expl-nation several times. Then the Volunteer should use the same descriptive explanation. If he cannot repeat the entire explanation, then he should ask the informant to repeat the explanation sentence by sentence.

Please repeat one sentence at a time.

I will repeat the sentence after you.

Sentences should be repeated until the entire explanation is mastered. The Volunteer should ask questions about what people in the picture are doing if the informant's explanation is too simple. The Volunteer might also record vocabulary under corresponding pictures to compile a pictorial dictionary by topic. Reviewing vocabulary with these pictures eliminates need for English translation; terminology will be learned functionally.

3. Associations

The advantages of the "association" technique are expansion of vocabulary on one topic and eliciting information on job-related objects and ideas.

The Volunteer tells the informant:

I will say a word.
(You) say several sentences
about that word.
Say whatever comes into your head.

Initially, the Volunteer should use words for tangible objects, like box, pencil, water, etc., so that the informant can have a visual as well as an audial stimulus. Later, words for abstracts, like education, liberty, family, etc., may be used for insight into cultural values.

Again, the Volunteer should repeat and master the informant's sentences.

4. Task-Oriented Situations

Because task-oriented situations deal with action, they provide excellent practice in verb usage. Because the task involves props and actions, vocabulary is completely defined. Because only one task is described, vocabulary on one topic is expanded.

The Volunteer chooses some task or process, perhaps related to his job, that he needs to learn to describe. He may need to supply visual aids involved in the task so that the informant can demonstrate the process or task he is explaining. The Volunteer asks (as he hands over the props, for example):

How do you cook rice?
How do you write a letter?
How do you wash a baby? etc...

(These as well as other situations are suitable only if cooking, writing, washing, etc. equipment is available for demonstration).

Show me.

The Volunteer should then let the informant explain and demonstrate the entire process. The informant should repeat the process:

Please repeat the whole thing.

then, break the explanation into two or three sentence units. The Volunteer should repeat these sentences until he can explain and demonstrate the entire process himself.

Say the first few sentences.
I will repeat.
Say the next few sentences.

Onee the Volunteer has mastered the explanation in the present tense, he may then go through the same explanation using imperative, future, past, subjunctive, or conditional forms. He can also change verb person to I, we, you, they, etc. He will thus become more flexible in using tense, number, and gender.

5. Narratives

Narratives are good comprehension exercises for the Volunteer and provide practice in generating sentences that can be corrected.

The Volunteer asks the informant to relate an incident or tell a short story.

Tell me an interesting thing that happened to you once (an interesting story).

The informant relates whatever tale he likes. If the Volunteer wants him to talk about some specific subject, he says, for example:

Tell me about your school days.

The story or incident should be repeated by the informant, then summarized by the Volunteer.

If you repeat, then I will summarize.

When the informant has repeated his monologue enough for total comprehension, the Volunteer should summarize.

If the Volunteer so desires, he may also repeat the original monologue and/or ask questions about it.

6. Role Play

In role play, the Volunteer can generate his own sentences in a simulated real-life situation yet benefit from correction. A role play is a situation taken from real life where the informant and Volunteer play the roles of people in that situation (e.g. a taxi driver and his passenger; a cloth merchant and his customer; a rural development officer and a farmer. The Volunteer must describe both the situation and the roles to be acted. The dialogue then begins. When the dialogue is finished, roles should be reversed so that the Volunteer can observe, then copy the informant's original role. Correction by the informant is implicit in this technique.

I will describe a situation (Here the situations is described).

You be _____.
I will be _____.

7. Free Conversation

Like role play, this technique is useful for:

generating original sentences;
expressing personal ideas about something;
and comprehension.

The Volunteer asks the informant to talk about a mutual acquaintance, historical or legendary character, or national hero. The Volunteer should ask questions and add comments about the informant's description. (The same procedure may be applied to any topic). When talking about people the Volunteer should ask:

If you were _____, what would you do?

The Volunteer should also tell the informant about people he knows and action he would take if he were they.

If I were _____, I would do thus.

8. Reading and Discussion

Reading is good for vocabulary expansion. When the Volunteer reads with the informant, a dictionary is unnecessary. However, every Volunteer should have a dictionary so that he can read on his own and check new word meanings and usage. The Volunteer starts with elementary reading materials and asks his informant to help. Graded texts are suggested. As his accuracy and speed improves, he should start reading newspaper articles also. All reading selections can be used for discussion and/or summary.

LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE FIELD

A policy statement for Senegal Peace Corps Volunteers

Some people can learn a language quickly and effectively just by living where the language is spoken. Most people can pick up a language slowly in the same situation. Your need to be able to communicate is present and pressing and you will often feel frustrated and poorly prepared. Two years begin to seem like a very short time in which to get anything done or even started. For you, slowly is not the way you want to learn. For you, training cannot end with "in-country training". It has to continue over your two years here.

In Dakar, you were working with a trained teacher and it was his responsability to communicate a body of material thought to be necessary for your job. In the field, if you want to continue your training you will be working with an untrained informant and the burden of learning and deciding what you have to know falls on your shoulders. The purpose of this paper is to help you set up your own continuing leanguage training.

How to continue your language training

Some exceptional people learn best in totally informal situations. Most of us, however, need the discipline of a regularly set period during which we agree to concentrate our attention on the language we want to learn. Consider your language level and your work schedule and decide how much time a week you are going to spend on language. (If you feel really weak and want to improve quickly a minimum of three one hour sessions a week is advisable).

The next problem is finding a language informant. Ask questions, and get to know as many people as possible before making your choice. The informant should be someone you like and respect who explains well and who understands quickly what you are asking. If you are studying a local language the fact that an informant does not speak French makes things more difficult, but should not automatically eliminate him as a possible source.

How to work with an informant

Some of the following ideas may be more appropriate for studying French, some for local language, some for advanced students, some for beginners. Try as many of them as possible and let us know how well they work.

I. The first thing you must decide is what you have to learn.

Make a list or diagram of the people you regularly have contact with. Think about what you talk about and under what circumstances you meet. Use these situations as a basis for dialogues or descriptions and for deciding what grammatical structures you need but cannot use.

II. Free conversation is often interesting but not very fruitful unless the teacher systematically corrects mistakes and has the student repeat correct sentences and create new ones based on the pattern in question. Most untrained teachers get so interested in the subject matter that they do not correct properly, but if you have a cassette recorder, you can record short conversations and go back over the tape sentence by sentence, having the teacher correct you.

A useful correction might look like this:

Elève: Je m'occupe avec le Centre Social
Prof: DU
Elève: Aah, je m'occupe du Centre Social
Prof: Bien. Répétez encore... Je m'occupe du Centre Social.

Elève repeats.
Prof asks: a) Vous vous occupez du Centre Social?
b) Vous vous occupez du Centre Social ou de la Maternité?
c) De quoi vous occupez-vous?

Elève answers.
Prof: Le gouverneur s'occupe-t-il du Centre?
Elève: Non, il ne s'occupe pas du Centre.
Prof: De quoi s'occupe-t-il?
Elève: Il s'occupe de la Région.
Prof: Qui est-ce qui s'occupe du Département?
Elève: C'est le Préfet qui s'occupe du Département?
Prof: Posez-moi des questions avec "s'occuper de".

Thus, the correction becomes a small conversation in which the student has the chance to use the corrected form in affirmative, negative and interrogative sentences. Remember: for each new sentence, be sure to learn the question and the negation as well.

III. Dessin o-con: *

For technical or cultural vocabulary, divide a blank page into six parts and make six simple drawings of objects related to a specific subject that interests you. (For example: a needle and thread, a spool of thread, a pair of scissors, a piece of material, a thimble, a knot).

A. With the aid of the informant, identify each drawing repeating the word carefully and writing it under the appropriate picture.

B. Make sentences with each object and have the teacher correct you.

C. Make a list of questions and answers that go with each drawing. Teacher corrects.

D. Create a situation, story or dialogue using the objects. Work on the text, creating sentence by sentence, first orally, then writing on a small blackboard, or on a piece of paper if there is no board available. (Limit the text to 6-8 sentences).

E. Read the text as you have written it, then slowly erase or cross out words in each line (first nouns, then verbs, then adjectives, etc.), once again reading the text after each series of erasures. Continue until the entire text has been erased and you can recite the entire lesson without a written text.

F. As a final review the teacher asks you questions about the text. There should be some review of the text the following day.

IV. Micro-con:*

Ask your informant to speak to you for exactly one minute on a topic that interests you. Have him speak on the same subject a second time. Also for exactly one minute. (If possible have a third person time informant). Ask him to use as many of the same structures and as much of the same vocabulary as possible. Ask him to do the same thing a third time.

Listen carefully and ask him questions about things you haven't understood. When you have asked all your questions, have the informant ask you questions about what he has said. Then you try to repeat, also in the space of one minute, exactly what the teacher has said to you. Try to use the same structures and vocabulary. The teacher should help you when you get stuck and correct you when you have finished. Again a cassette recorder can be very helpful for the corrections.

* Based on the ideas of Dartmouth language expert, Dr. John Rassias.

V. If you run out of topics of conversation, tell your teacher a story - Little Red Riding Hood, Romeo and Juliet, the American Civil War... Have him correct you or use the recorder as explained above. Encourage him to reciprocate with a folk tale or history of Senegal that he knows or heard as a child. Ask questions when you do not understand. This is a good speaking comprehension exercise, and a good device for interesting cultural material.

VI. Translation

A good exercise for more advanced students. Translate into the target language rather than from it into your own. If you are studying French, translate into French from English. If you are studying Wolof, translate from French or English into Wolof. The little booklets on malaria, health, and puericulture proved very useful during the training program. When you have finished translating a text (noting down the translation sentence by sentence), use the same erasure techniques outlined in III E and F to memorize.

VII. Describe or pantomime a series of actions that follow a real order - getting up in the morning, showering, getting dressed, eating breakfast, etc... - or in the case of technical vocabulary the steps in building a well of latrine, etc.

Begin in the first person (I) and learn the verbs involved. Then switch to you, he, etc. When you are comfortable with the verbs, ask the informant to help you change tenses. Never tell your informant to give you the "first person past tense" - ask him instead how he would say, "Yesterday, I....." Avoid asking your untrained teacher about the grammatical structure of the language. Understanding the grammar will come when you have gathered enough examples to draw your own conclusions. At that point, you will be able to create new sentences from the information you already have. Do not ask your informant to verify an abstract rule. Decide on what the rule seems to be, then make up an example that would fit your hypotheses and ask the teacher if the sentence is grammatically correct. If he says yes, make up more examples until you are satisfied that your hypothesis is correct. STAY AWAY FROM ABSTRACT GRAMMAR RULES UNLESS YOUR INFORMANT IS EXCEPTIONALLY GIFTED AND AWARE OF HIS OWN LANGUAGE. Remember, most of you would have a lot of difficulty explaining to a non-English speaker when to use I went and when to use I have gone. The fact that you can use these forms correctly does not mean that you can explain them quickly and clearly to a puzzled student (unless, of course, you have had some grounding in grammar).

What support can you expect

As most of you already know, there exists in Dakar the Francophone Training Office (F.T.O., B.P. 5270, Dakar-Fann, Senegal). This office was set up last year to support and train volunteers in language and cross-cultural studies. Presently the office has one language coordinator (PAPE GAYE) and two training specialists, (Boubacar DIALLO and Gary ENGELBERG).

Responsabilities of the F.T.O. will include:

- Handling registration and reimbursement of language informants.
- Supplying suggestions like the above for working with informants in field.
- Developing social and technical French and local language materials for Senegal training and improving existing materials - all with your help.
- Helping to realize any suggestions you might have for other types of language support.
- Language testing at the request of PC/Senegal or at your request.
- Formal in-service language training (formal language classes for a group of volunteers for a specified period of time during your volunteer service) at your request with the approval of Peace Corps/Senegal.

Administrative guidelines

The F.T.O. will reimburse you for up to a total of three (3) hours per week of language classes (French and/or local language). We request your cooperation in adhering to the following guidelines for payment and reimbursement so that we can keep our records straight and give Peace Corps/ Senegal and other countries an idea of how much this program costs. The three hour limit is necessary to permit as many volunteers as possible to benefit from the limited money available for in-service training.

How to register your teacher

When you have found a teacher, please drop Keith OLSON (F.T.O. Business Manager) a line giving the teacher's name and any relevant information (age, work, marital status, special interests or talents, previous experience with PCVs, etc.). You cannot be reimbursed if your teacher is not registered with Keith. Should you change teachers, Keith should again be informed. When registering a teacher, also include the rate of payment agreed to, anticipated number of hours per week and planned duration of lessons.

How much do you pay?

If you can establish a satisfactory non-paying class with a Senegalese friend, or if you can exchange English lessons for Wolof and are willing to do so, so much the better. If you find it necessary to pay your informant you may use the following guidelines.

Secondary School Teacher-Professeur - 350 to 450 CFA/hour
Primary School Teacher-Instituteur - 250 to 350 CFA/hour
Inexperienced Teacher - up to 250/hour

You should always consider the experience of the teacher, as well as your place of assignment. In the larger cities, rates will lean towards the higher figure. You should negociate a fair and reasonable rate.

Payment and Reimbursement

Either you or your language teacher should write up a monthly bill, which should include the following information:

Name of teacher: Language:
Name of volunteer: Mailing address:
Period of Bill: From_____to_____

Total number of Hours_____x Rate/hr. - _____CFA
Amt. Paid

I (teacher's name) have received _____CFA for _____hours of (language)_____ classes with PCV(s)_____.
Signed:

Language Teacher_____ DATE:_____
PCV_____

You should pay your teacher and then forward the bill to Keith OLSON, B.P. 5270, Dakar-Fann, Senegal for reimbursement. Your reimbursement will be mailed to you by MANDAT unless you indicate you want it held for you at the F.T.O. office in Dakar.

Address all questions on administrative procedures and reimbursement to Keith, and questions on content of classes or techniques to Papa GAYE at the same address. Keep us advised as to how your classes are progressing, the kinds of problems you are having and how we can be of help.

. . . . . .